

FACT SHEET: Public Broadcasting Funding

The Republican Strategy: If not Control, Then Destroy

Americans overwhelmingly see public broadcasting as an unbiased information source. Perhaps that is what the GOP finds so offensive about it.

Republican leaders are trying to bring every facet of the federal government under their control. They are threatening attacks on independent judges, they are trying to dictate to families how to deal with agonizing end of life decisions confronting loved ones, they tried to change house ethics rules to protect their members, and now they are trying to put their ideological stamp on public broadcasting.

Bush appointee Ken Tomlinson, Chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, has come under fire for his efforts to make public broadcasting more conservative to reflect “the Republican mandate.” A former RNC Co-Chair is the White House favorite to take over as the Corporation’s chief executive.

Now, House Republicans are looking to cut funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting

In this year’s Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill, House Republicans have gutted funding for public broadcasting stations across the country.

Base budget cut by 25%: House Republicans have decided to un-do work done in past appropriations and rescind \$100 million from public broadcasting’s 2006 budget, a drastic cut in a \$400 million appropriation for CPB and a cut 10 times greater than proposed by the Bush Administration.

Cuts to digital conversion: The FCC requires that local stations upgrade their systems to digital. In 2005 Congress spent \$39.4 million towards this end. Public broadcasting stations need \$30 million to continue these efforts in 2006. The need has not gone away, but Republicans want these costs to be paid from an already-reduced base appropriation.

Cuts to satellite upgrade: Since 2004 PBS has been working to replace a satellite system for public television costing \$120 million. To date they have received \$50 million and need another \$52 million in 2006. Republicans want PBS and public broadcasting stations to absorb the required funding.

The Ugly Result: Public broadcasting stations may see operating funds cut up to 46%.

Democrats Restore Future Funding: Traditionally, Congress funds public broadcasting two years in advance. But this year, House Republicans tried to zero out funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 2008. Rep. David Obey offered an amendment accepted in a meeting of the full appropriations committee to restore these funds to \$400 million.

Prepared by the House Appropriations Committee Democratic Staff. Contact Kirstin Brost 202-225-3481.